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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0502
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6918
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6980
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; November 13, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo
Math Score Expected to Determine Success or Failure
in Being Admitted to College

JoongAng Ilbo, Dong-a Ilbo
ROK to Allow Dual Citizenship on Limited Basis

Hankook Ilbo
Former Korea Express President: "I Gave Money
to Three Influential Figures of the Roh Administration"

Hankyoreh Shinmun
Court Rules Former KBS Chief's Dismissal Unlawful

Segye Ilbo
Korean Language, English Sections on College Exam
Get Tougher

Seoul Shinmun
Ruling, Opposition Parties in Tense Tug of War over Budget
for Four-River Restoration Project

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

The ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said that the ROKG
remains unchanged in its plan to send civilian workers and security
forces to help reconstruct Afghanistan, despite attacks on ROK
companies there. (Hankyoreh)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

North Korea's state-run newspaper Rodong Sinmun said on November 12
that the recent inter-Korean naval clash was a "deliberate and
premeditated provocation" and warned that the ROK military "will be
forced to pay dearly" for the action. (All) It is noteworthy that
the North's criticism was only targeted at the ROK military

authorities, not the ROKG or President Lee Myung-bak. (Hankyoreh, Seoul)

Japan's NHK reported yesterday that ROK Labor Minister Yim Tae-hee met unofficially with Kim Yang-gon, the North Korean official in charge of inter-Korean relations, in Singapore last month to discuss an inter-Korean summit, but their talks ended without progress. (Dong-a, Hankook)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-President Obama in Asia

Conservative Chosun Ilbo said on its front page that Obama's first Asia trip will be tough for him because he will face challenging issues, such as the U.S. base relocation in Japan, human rights abuses in China, and the ROK-U.S. FTA.

-North Korea - South Korea

Most newspapers carried the November 12 commentary of North Korea's state-run newspaper Rodong Sinmun. It said that the recent inter-Korean naval clash was a "deliberate and premeditated provocation" and warned that the ROK military "will be forced to pay dearly" for the action. Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun said that it is noteworthy that the North's criticism was only targeted at the

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ROK military authorities, not the ROKG or President Lee Myung-bak.

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo and moderate Hankook Ilbo replayed Japan's NHK report that ROK Labor Minister Yim Tae-hee met unofficially with Kim Yang-gon, the North Korean official in charge of inter-Korean relations, in Singapore last month to discuss an inter-Korean summit, but their talks ended without progress.

-Afghanistan

Most newspapers reported that U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry expressed his reservations about deploying additional troops to Afghanistan, worrying that the U.S.'s troop dispatch will increase the Afghan government's dependence on U.S. support. Chosun Ilbo reported that the U.S. will reconsider its additional troop dispatch plan, with U.S. President Barack Obama having called on his national security team to revise the options for the U.S. war strategy in Afghanistan during the latest review of his Afghanistan policy.

Hankyoreh Shinmun quoted a Blue House official as saying that the ROKG remains unchanged in its plan to send civilian workers and security forces to help reconstruct Afghanistan, despite attacks on ROK companies there.

Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized: "It was confirmed that around the time that the ROKG announced its decision to send troops to Afghanistan, armed gunmen assaulted the ROK firm's road construction site three times. This clearly shows how reckless the ROKG's decision on troop redeployment was. ... We cannot but suspect that the attack may have been designed to warn Seoul against troop redeployment. Still, the ROKG rushed to say that it appears that the Taliban was not behind the attack, which is an irresponsible (approach) for a government that should protect its people. ... The decision to redeploy ROK troops to Afghanistan must be retracted."

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

U.S.-JAPAN CONFLICTS AND THE HATOYAMA ADMINISTRATION'S TRUE INTENTIONS
(JoongAng Ilbo, November 13, page 45: Excerpts)

By Yoon Duk-min, Professor at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and

Security

Japan has decided to stop refueling American warships in the Indian Ocean starting next January. The Hatoyama Administration also wants Futenma air base moved off Okinawa or pulled out of Japan completely. This means scrapping a 2006 U.S.-Japan agreement over the U.S. military's realignment in Japan. Hatoyama said during a trilateral summit of the ROK, China and Japan that Japan has been overly reliant on the U.S., adding that even though the U.S.-Japan alliance is important, Japan wants to put more focus on Asia. Hatoyama claims the U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy. However, he also calls for reviewing the bilateral alliance in a comprehensive manner.

U.S. has reacted coolly. State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly said during a press conference, "It's up to Japan to decide what kind of relationship they want to have." Washington Post even reported that Japan, not China, is the U.S.'s most problematic relationship in Asia.

Why does Prime Minister Hatoyama say "No" to the U.S. especially at a delicate time when Japan's national power is being eclipsed by China's? Japan seeks to become a true sovereign country that acts in its national interest by overcoming the lingering scars of the defeat of war. To this end, Japan has expressed a preference for a more equitable relationship with Washington, while placing more importance on Asia. In addition, Japan wants to be free from the burden of its historical past in dealing with the ROK and China.

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This position by Hatoyama offers a great opportunity to President Lee Myung-bak, ahead of the ROK-U.S. summit. Some people say that former President Roh had said all he wanted to say to the U.S. However, the Roh Administration reaped little practical gains even though it deployed 3,600 troops to Iraq. In contrast, former Prime Minister Koizumi gained practical benefits by underscoring the importance of Japan's relations with the U.S. The Hatoyama Administration is hastily devising ways to provide 7 billion dollars of aid to Afghanistan to patch up relations with the U.S., prior to the U.S. -Japan summit. Dismayed by Japan's recent moves, President Obama may need to hear a warm word from an ally. Practical gains matter more than words. We expect that the U.S.-ROK summit will be a place where the ROK strengthens its strategic alliance with the U.S. and achieves practical gains in the KORUS FTA and North Korean nuclear issues.

ATTACKS DEMONSTRATE NEED TO RETRACT TROOP REDEPLOYMENT PLAN
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, November 13, 2009, page 31)

It was confirmed that around the time that the ROKG announced its decision to send troops to Afghanistan, armed gunmen assaulted the ROK firm's road construction site three times. This clearly shows how reckless the ROKG's decision on troop redeployment was.

The Lee Administration has argued that the ROK suffered no direct casualties and said, "Since it was a minor attack or simple arson, it is difficult to view it as the work of the Taliban." These claims, however, are unconvincing. The militants did not demand money or take items. They simply set fire to equipment and fired warning shots. The attacks also took place in the period immediately before and after the redeployment decision. We cannot but suspect that the attack may have been designed to warn Seoul against troop redeployment. Still, the ROKG rushed to say that it appears that the Taliban was not behind the attack, which is an irresponsible (approach) for a government that should protect its people.

Presently, Afghanistan is in a state of extreme unrest, not only in terms of public security, but in the political situation as well. For this reason, even U.S. President Barack Obama is taking great pains with the decision to put more forces there and arguing that there are limits to the U.S.'s dedication to Afghanistan. This is due to concern over the dangers that might arise from rash deployments in a situation of high uncertainty, with the leadership

ability of Afghan President Hamid Karzai in doubt.

Despite all of this, the ROK government announced on Oct. 30 that it would be sending in civilian reconstruction workers, as well as soldiers and police officers to guard them. In total, some 400 to 500 people are being dispatched. As justification for sending troops, the government cited the need to establish conditions for the stable stationing of U.S. forces in the ROK and a responsibility to contribute to the war on terror as a "global Korea." This is an absurd rationale. The war on terror has long since lost any justification it may have had. Even the Obama Administration stays away from the term. The U.S. sent troops to Afghanistan to stamp out Al-Qaeda, but the result has been that the entire national territory has turned into a battlefield and some 40,000 residents have lost their lives to date. In addition, the U.S.'s inability to deal a decisive blow to Al-Qaeda has only succeeded in strengthening Taliban forces and extremists in neighboring Pakistan, making the region even more unstable. There is no reason for diving into this powder keg and for placing our citizens' lives in danger.

Japan made the decision to end Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling assistance for multinational naval vessels and to provide economic support to Afghanistan and Pakistan instead. Moreover, no other nation which has withdrawn forces has made the decision to redeploy forces. Instead of sending our young people off into a war without justification, a better plan for international service would be to provide economic support that is of real help to the people of Afghanistan. The decision to redeploy ROK troops to Afghanistan must be retracted.

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(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

STEPHENS